

Josh Mangelson 0:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Carla Long 00:33

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. My name is Carla Long, and I am your host, and you're listening to the What's Brewing series, where we talk about mission that is happening all over the church. Today, we're doing something a little new and different for me. We're talking to a panel of people to discuss their experience with ordination with online ordination. And I am super excited about this panel and hearing from these wonderful people. Now you might say, "Carla, this podcast does not belong in the What's Brewing Series. This is not mission." But friends, it is the church is working through right now how to be a church in the digital age. And in the midst of a global pandemic, we are continuing trying to learn how to minister to people where they are. And where we are right now is at home, not in person, church. So it is mission, it's just not necessarily the mission that we're used to. So I'm going to welcome and have my special guests introduce themselves. First of all, we have Carrie and Steve and Roy and Tyler and Gail, and I'm super excited to hear from you. So please, each of you in that order. Just tell us a little bit about yourself. Okay,

Carrie Welch 01:49

Good morning. I am Carrie Welch. I currently live in Salem, Oregon, and I work as a field support minister in the Southeast USA field. And I was recently ordained a bishop, which is why I'm on the podcast today. And I've worked with Community of Christ for about 15 years with an eight year break in the middle there, so.

Carla Long 02:11

You've worked for Community of Christ for 15 years?

Carrie Welch 02:13

I know.

Carla Long 02:14

That's amazing!

Carrie Welch 02:14

I started when I was really young.

Carla Long 02:17

Just probably like 10 years old.

Carrie Welch 02:20

Or 25, right.

Carla Long 02:23

That sounds very nice. I've actually worked for Community Christ for 16 years, and I started when I was, oh I don't remember 30?

Carrie Welch 02:30

I was one of their Transformation 2000 ministers.

Carla Long 02:33

Oh, wow. Wow. Wow. Okay, I didn't start at 30 because I'm not 45 now, I just did the math. Thanks, Carrie. Next, Steve!

Steve Otteson 02:41

Hi, I'm Steve Steve Otteson. I live in Redmond, Washington. And I work at Microsoft for I've been for 20 plus years. And yeah, I've been a member of Korea Christ since 2017. I grew up LDS and just love the community I've found here was ordained and elder, I guess is last November.

Carla Long 03:04

Thanks, Steve. I didn't realize you've been with us since 2017. That's awesome.

Steve Otteson 03:07

Yeah, yeah, it's been great.

Carla Long 03:09

Awesome. All right, Roy, on to you.

Gail Shurtleff 03:11

Hi my name is Roy Otteson. I live in Redmond, Washington. And I'm married to Steve and I am a assistant behavior analyst and also recently opened up my own spiritual direction practice. I come from the LDS tradition, and became a member of Community of Christ a couple of years ago. And I have

really enjoyed this journey in this space, especially all the people allowing space for my different opinions and ideas.

Carla Long 03:45

I'm learning so much about you all already. You have your own spiritual direction practice? That's so cool. Tyler onto you.

Tyler Marz 03:55

Hi, I'm Tyler Marz. I live in Seattle, Washington, and I was recently ordained to the office of priest back in November as well. I currently am unemployed thanks to the wonderful pandemic and the hit that is taken to the hospitality industry. But I guess just a couple details about me, one I am a member of our pastor team of our congregation, Crystal Springs, and I am an avid cook and Baker.

Carla Long 04:22

Tyler, I will never ever, ever forget your ordination prayer. She said oh gosh, I hope I don't forget it. Now she said something like the Holy Baker of the sacred biscuits that was in your ordination prayer!

Tyler Marz 04:35

That is correct. And I loved that part of it. She really did a great job of tying in those issues.

Carla Long 04:41

Every time your name comes up in my household, Kuzma, my husband will say "Ah the Holy Baker of the sacred biscuits." I'm like that's him!

Tyler Marz 04:49

I love that.

Carla Long 04:51

And last but certainly not least, Gail

Gail Shurtleff 04:55

Hello, I'm Gail Shurtleff. I am California born and bred, but presently, I live in the Netherlands. And I am a psychotherapist. I am also starting my own adventure into spiritual direction this coming Tuesday. I was ordained as an elder in November of 2020.

Carla Long 05:25

That is awesome. Gail that is so exciting. You're entering into new things, and life is just gonna explode for you. Not that it hasn't already exploded. You're kind of an explosion kind of lady, which I love about you.

Gail Shurtleff 05:36

Thank you.

Carla Long 05:37

So thanks, everyone, for introducing yourself. I can already tell this is gonna be a super fun podcast. So Carrie, we're gonna start with you, because you are a Community of Christ. lifer. And so can you talk a little bit about you've been ordained, both in person and online? Can you talk about what those experiences are like, and maybe compare and contrast those two?

Carrie Welch 05:59

Absolutely. So I am a sixth generation Community of Christ member. My dad took great pride in that. And so that's been fun, I have absolutely grown up with the idea of priesthood. And that those called to serve are to do so with humility and great devotion. But part of my story starts when I was young, when women were not even allowed to be in the priesthood. So when I was 12, that changed with Doctrine and Covenants section 156. And shortly thereafter, my mom was ordained. And that was a big deal in my family, which is a whole other podcast. In short, they didn't support that. So they joined the restoration group. But my family, my immediate family continued on. And I watched her navigate both family and work relationships and church relationships. And just shout out to all those first generation women that served in the priesthood that really paved the way for myself and others. So I grew up even in Sunday school learning about priesthood and what that was, and watch that happen all the time. And it was always done in a very reverent way, you know, at, at its own service, often or at a mission center conference, depending on the office, you know, and so that's actually how I was ordained the first couple times in my 20s, I was ordained to elder in my 30s, I was ordained to high priest, and both of those times were wonderful, you know, and done in person with hands on my head, and it was very reverent, and they felt a great spirit, and we hug afterwards, you know, and go on. And there's good support for learning how to function and serving your role. And those are all things that I really took for granted. Prior to my last ordination. I was called to the office of Bishop about a year ago, and was just recently ordained last October, so just a few months ago, but prior to that was called to serve. And I actually scheduled it twice. I wanted to do it in person with family and my apostle lives in Missouri, my whole family lives in Missouri. And I don't, so I was planning to travel back to Missouri to have this experience and share it with those I love. And because of the pandemic it was canceled twice. And so as I got edged up to my year mark, I started freaking out. And just then we received word from the First Presidency that the church has continuing to shift and grow with the times that we are and

that online ordination is something that we could now consider. And I said, Yes, absolutely. Let's give it a go. And so we did, I was ordained by apostle Barbara Carter, and presiding bishopric, Stassi Cramm. So none of us were in the same place. And I didn't have to travel back to independence. But my family was able to join via zoom from all across the country. I had my husband by my side. So that was the same. My family was still part of it. You know, those people that have been inspirational to me, and wanted to ordain me were part of it, just in a really different way. So to contrast, how that was made differently, we had to kind of negotiate and figure out how we were going to physically do this right? And represent it. So I coordinated with my mission center president and she was on board and said, Absolutely. Let's include this in the service. And so as we are continuing to learn, we realized that zoom then had a way to position our pictures on the screen like Brady Bunch and figure out the people that were on top and I was on the bottom and they would hold their hands out. And, and so it would appear that I was being touched or held, you know, in prayer both physically and symbolically. And I thought that might be a little, little weird, and we all kind of weren't sure how that was going to go. But let me tell you, it was amazing. After we got through the practice, and got all the kinks worked out, and worries worked out, the experience itself was phenomenal. I felt as though it they were right there in person. And I wasn't watching the screen, because I was really focused on just wanting to be present in the moment. But watching it back was really neat, too, you know, they were able to hold their hands out, and the hands are a really big symbol. So they were able to hold their hands out it as though it felt like they were touching me, certainly in an extension of their spirit towards me. And their prayer towards me. And I learned and I heard later from from other people, other people then shared that they wanted to, to participate in that worship, and actually reached out and found themselves touching the screen to be part of that experience. And it reminded me of sometimes at church, I don't know, if you have had this experience where somebody is being prayed for, and the community will all go up and gather around that person that somebody either ordains or, you know, does administration for somebody, and we all want to be a part of that. So we all gather around and hold hands. And we had our own virtual version of that. And I thought that was just so spectacular. humbling that people would want to support me in that way. But also that that was just a natural reaction for them to reach out and touch that screen and be a part of that and share that experience in a way that wouldn't have happened if we had been together in person.

Carla Long 12:09

That sounds really awesome. I have never done like been the recipient of an online sacrament like that, except for communion. And the way you describe it, Carrie, I i just i for me, I can just, I just think about what would be missing, I would be missing the hugs afterward and the going to lunch afterwards. because food is a very important part of my life. But the way you describe it makes me feel like you didn't miss out on anything at all. The Spirit was there, your friends were there. And I had no idea you could reconfigure zoom to make it look like someone's that's amazing. It was amazing.

Carrie Welch 12:50

It was an excellent experience.

Carla Long 12:53

Well, that makes me really happy, especially since you're the only one in this panel that has had both an in person ordination and online ordination in Community of Christ. So thank you so much for sharing your experience. Did you want to say anything else? Before we move on to Steve?

Carrie Welch 13:07

Go ahead and move on. And we'll come back. Yeah. Steve, I would love to hear about your experience. And you know, you can tell us the whole umbrella of stuff you can tell us whatever you want to tell us you can talk about when you were called you can talk about what it was like to be ordained online. I'd love to hear it all.

Steve Otteson 13:22

Okay, sure. So I guess it's been a long time 2019, Roy and I were camping with some friends We got a call from I can't believe I can't remember his Karin Peter, or I think it was Karin and said she said that she wanted to talk to us wanted to meet us for lunch. And we thought okay, that's unusual on our way back from camping. And so we met with her and, and she and another one for the pastor Deborah met us for lunch. And they extended the call to us to be elders and I was not expecting that. You know, it's been very different coming from the LDS background where it's all, as a male, it's just almost like a birth, right? It's like a, you turn 18 and you get melchisedec priesthood and I I knew it wasn't that way and Community of Christ. And so I never was not expecting it. But when the offer was made, it was very humbling to us and then and they explained this, this could be a long term thing, you know, you have to do the classes and I had done one of the classes already and Roy needed to do all three, but we went to the classes which we enjoyed a lot. And then I was already running, started run zoom church when the pandemic hit. And when it first started, we never thought it was going to go on for months and months, right? We thought okay, this seems like a temporary thing and we will meet for until the danger is over, but as things dragged on, we realized oh, this could last for a while. Meanwhile we'd had the classes done for, we'd been, had the class that for months. And the pastorate started talking well how do we get these ordinations done even though we're not meeting at all we've not met together for basically since early March, how do we do that? And I know people in the pastorate researched how we could do this and we, Roylene and I picked a couple of our congregation. They were, they're our adoptive parents. And we just love them. And we knew we wanted them to ordain us. On the other hand, they're in their 70s. And we, The last thing we wanted to do was jeopardize their health with Coronavirus. And, but we decided we could kind of do a hybrid. So we could, so what we did, and we did this, I think we were very safe about it. We, that Sunday, I was Communion Sunday,

and we met in their house, but we were we were in one office, and we had the windows open and we were wearing masks Roy and I. And then they were in another part of the house for the service. And I was, I've been running our zoom services. So I connected to his Ethernet who was running the zoom surface and that little in a little office while they were in another part of the house. And then when it came time for the ordinations they came in and were wearing their masks. And so we were just in the same room, probably for just a few minutes right, to do that ordination. So it was a hybrid in that they were physically there with us, but then we still had the congregation on zoom. And it was just a beautiful experience these these two really are like parents to us, it was just a wonderful feeling of love to be there with them. And I don't know, it's hard to describe. Just very touched by their words. And another great advantage to be online is we can invite other people from all over the country. We run a support group for former Mormons and we had several people from them come to the service. Because with zoom was easier, easier to get to them driving to our service, where we would normally meet. And so that was beautiful to have so many people show up for us and support us that couldn't be there. And I like you said, Carla, I do miss the going to lunch after and the hugs, that would have been great. But on the other hand, we did you know the pros to this, we had a lot of people show up that couldn't have been there. And then I think maybe even more memorable, memorable for me after that, as beautiful as that was, was getting to bless communion with my wife right after that. You know, the first time I ever heard a woman say, the communion prayer in Community, Christ, it really touched me because I've been hungering for that my whole life. And to hear my wife say those words, that's really something I'll never forget. It was just really beautiful.

Carla Long 17:48

Well, that's making me cry a little bit. Thank you, Steve. I really loved hearing that story. And I don't know about you. I actually performed an ordination. In August, during the pandemic outside, I was inside, he was sitting outside and we got to do like a hybrid, like you said, and really just being close to a person that wasn't a member of my family was kind of thrilling. So there, I'm sure there's a lot of different emotions running through you in that time. Thank you so much for sharing your story. Did you have anything else to share? Should we move on?

Steve Otteson 18:22

No, I think that's good.

Carla Long 18:23

Thank you. All right, Roy, you're up. Tell us about your experience.

Royleane Otteson 18:28

Well, Steve did a good job kind of summarizing the whole thing. The part I want to add about our calls is that I had joined Community of Christ that I was still very much and to this day and continuing to, I

would call continue to evolve with my faith and ideas and stuff. And during that time, I actually was at a place of not sure how I felt about priesthood. And so it was humbling to receive that call. And it also was an invitation to me to work through that like to not put it on a shelf and deal with it later to really work through that and to decide if that's something that I wanted to participate in. And I loved also that unlike the LDS tradition, we were given the call and we didn't have to give an answer right there. It was, you know, think about it, pray about it. See if there's something you have time for. It very, very respectful of and no expectations like if this doesn't work for you, like no judgment and expectations on that. So I did a lot of research and a lot of talking with my husband and came to a place where I felt comfortable and understanding that in this community in the spiritual community that accepting this comment that I could serve and do blessings and different things which honestly I had been doing blessings in our faith transition group, right? So that's kind of part of that was from was just like not needing necessarily any authority or any you know, someone telling me that, but understanding that in this spiritual community, the way that it is organized, there's no special power or anything but it the way is organized, this was a call for me. And, and I just yeah, I came to a very, very good place of peace about that, especially going through the classes. Understanding, you know more at the very different, I had to really break down the difference between priest and LDS church and President Community of Christ. So that was a big part of the journey for me. And then on our ordination day, we just love the Irby's so much, it was such a beautiful experience, to have them to have them first, you know, set it up safely for us to be able to be near them. And to have them be able to lay their hands on our heads for that. And especially because we haven't been able to fully share still with our family, our full journey here. And so they really are like our adopted parents in this way that can celebrate kind of these milestones and different things that we're going through now. I did not know how much it would mean to me, on that day of my ordination, I think I didn't realize all the emotion that was buried deep within me about for me, having being ordained by a woman to be an elder, and then to be able to bless the sacrament was fully being fully seen, fully accepted and, and celebrated in this community. And just kind of all of it brought up more of like kind of the the pain, you know, that I had felt not being seen. But then also the gratitude and peace from being in a community that I was seeing. And I, I was surprised, I was surprised at the amount of motion that came up for me that day, because it had been a full year or more, since we'd had our classes and since we'd had the call. And I was like okay, let's just do this. And I was really, really surprised and surprise of hearing how much emotion came up for me when I heard my husband say the sacramental prayer, because he hadn't been able to do that, you know, he had his temple recommend taking away in the bishops office. And he was no longer able to do that in that community. And so to hear him say that, I hadn't heard him to see it in like four or five years. I was surprised how much emotion it brought up for me. Because also realizing that we were both, we were both celebrated in this community. And as far as the online just like Steve said, It was amazing to have all the the family and friends and the whole congregation just so much love and support. I've, all I've felt from the congregation, the pastorate team, and everybody is just love and

support and no judgment the whole time. I've been in the spiritual community. So sorry, I get emotional.

Carla Long 23:16

No need to be sorry. I think that that it's a it speaks to the level of emotion that you have around the whole thing. And I I think that some people might be a little bit down on online sacraments, like they're not as spiritual. And what I'm hearing from you is that is simply not true. So thank you for sharing your story. Also, I just want to add I too love the Irby's. I worked with them in California for six years when I lived out there and I too love the Irby's they are incredibly wonderful people and so I wondered if that's who you're talking about when you when Steve mentioned it.

Steve Otteson 23:53

I hadn't said their names, I don't want to people to think I forgot I just I didn't know if I should out them, but I do love the Irby's. They're just lovely people. I adore them.

Carla Long 24:04

I'm afraid now they're outed Hello, hello, Irby's! Royleane, did it. So really, thank you so much for sharing. Is there anything else you want to share before we move on to Tyler?

Royleane Otteson 24:15

No, thank you for letting me share my story.

Carla Long 24:19

I'm so glad that you were willing to do that. Thank you. Okay, Tyler, on to you.

Tyler Marz 24:25

Thanks, Carla. Um, so I guess to start, I think Steve and Royleane and I we all received our calls around the same time. And for me, it happened at a very common Community of Christ post church gathering lunch in a restaurant. We we love our food. And I would have to say that I, I had something working within me for for a few years that I felt like I had a call or maybe a desire to priesthood or realize that I had some skills that might benefit priesthood in some way. But I think as is common, you, those things ruminate in you for months and years until they they come to fruition in one way or another. And so when I was when I was offered this call from our our pastor at the time, here in our congregation at Crystal Springs, when she called me to the office of priest, I, I knew that that was the right office for me at this time. I knew that it was what I described as it fit me like a glove in a way it I had skills that I knew were just completely and authentically me and how I work with people, and how I care about people, and how I'm a minister of presence. So then, and that was fall of 2019. And so I began taking pre suit classes, and then the pandemic kits. And I had finished my preset classes, but we had no idea or I had

no idea how or when I would actually be ordained. And I tried to put that on the back burner a little bit, because there was not much that I could do about making that happen. But I did wonder and I am grateful for the world church in continuing their, what I call their prophetic process of figuring this out of how we can offer the sacraments and ordinations and keep sort of the work of the church moving forward in a time when we can't be together physically. And so I'm super grateful that they they found a way to make it work. And so for me, I, I had a bit of a hybrid ordination of sorts as well. So I had one individual actually Royleane, who I met with her in person at their house, and she physically laid her hands on my head. But then another dear friend of mine and fellow pastor team member, offered the ordination prayer. And she did that from a distance via zoom. And so for me, it was, it was no less meaningful, I still did feel someone's hands on my head. But I think one of the most unique and beautiful parts about it is that I had people from all over the world attended my ordination, people that I had met through my various connections of Latter-day Seekers being a former member of the LDS church, I had people from my seminary program that I'm currently enrolled in, I had friends from other congregations from spiritual formation and companioning program. And having those people be there and be able to attend was deeply meaningful, but had this service not been on zoom, that would have been impossible. And so for me, it was all the more meaningful to have them there to share their love and support, I had family members from around the us be able to tune in, all of which are not members of our faith. And so that was deeply meaningful for me. I would say one thing, though, that I don't want to say necessarily issue, but one thing that I I didn't realize would be so meaningful for me was that in the LDS church, there's a concept of worthiness that is tied to priesthood. And that is not something that exists in Community of Christ, at least, remotely at the same level that it is, and the LDS church, and I didn't realize how much that would, that would impact me that I would never have to talk about how I was living my life or what I was doing or not doing to allow me to be able to minister to people in a way that priesthood allows. So for me, that's something I'm deeply grateful for, and still sort of working through and figuring out.

Carla Long 28:55

thank you, Tyler. Thank you so much. You know, what it sounds like to me, from everyone who's shared so far, is that when we do go back to in person, and someday we'll go back in person, we're gonna need to do some sort of online something to you know, like, it feels really good to have people who wouldn't, can't be there in person be able to be there. So, I and what I'm hearing from all of you so far is that it's a really meaningful and beautiful experience, even if you're not in the room if you are in the room, as long as we're together. So I keep thinking we gotta, we got to be better at what we're doing. Churches are going to have to start getting internet in their churches. Number one, let's just get going with that. Okay, thank you so much. Tyler. Are you finished? Was there anything else you wanted to say before I move on to Gail?

Tyler Marz 29:42

I think that's it. Thanks, Carla.

Carla Long 29:45

Thanks, Tyler. Okay, Gail on to you.

Gail Shurtleff 29:47

I knew about I call the 1990s when I was still LDS and I was standing on a street corner in Concord, California. At a bus stop and it caused my life to come apart. Fast forward to 2018 when I joined Community of Christ, and I still knew there was this call. And I'm like I could think of was, how is this possibly going to happen? I'll go into the details of my community, community later, but I had to let go of the knowing of that call to have come. In May of 2020. Joey Williams, and Rand Irons, contacted me by email. And I knew what was coming. They asked to meet with me, and we'd had a leadership meeting on on Zoom right before they would meet with me. I sat for that leadership meeting team meeting, knowing what I was dealing with, and praying that it would go smoothly. And Joey extended the call and Rand with witness that extension. And then they both saw something they've never seen before. And just started sobbing. Because it had been 25 years. It was amazing. Joey and Missouri, Rand in Wales, and me in the Netherlands. And this was happening. I have the publicly thank Sue Norton, for alerting me to the fact, when I first joined the church, I needed to take some of the temple school classes. So when the call came, I was ready to just do the elder's course. Which was going to start in June. And run through September was it July, I don't remember July, and it was going to run through September. And I did that and the whole time I was fighting with the fact that this has been 25 years, I want this done in person and it can't be in person. Finally, after wrestling with that, and coming to peace with that. And for me, this was significant because I knew none of my family would be there. They haven't been supportive of this for me. And it would be people from basically from Community Circle. And the one thing I knew that I wanted was I wanted this ordination to come completely from Community Circle. We have the priesthood, we have the people. And I wanted it to be that way. So I set a date. And when is the day I was kindly informed by the leadership team that now that they have the day. I'm not allowed to see any of the planning of this. Just send us your guest list. And don't do anything else. And so that's what I did. I was rather compliant. I showed up to the service on Sunday. And I was ordained by Claire James and Rand Irons. I had wanted, I had hoped Claire would say yes to doing the prayer, which she did. It was really beautiful. I wasn't sitting in the room that I'm in right now. I went to another room because I wanted to create some very sacred space around that and in this room are all things that I absolutely cherished and they're hung on the walls and it's just space that I go into, and I can look at these things, and there's a Spirit in there. And I sat down in the chair and Claire offered the prayer. As I said, they're amazed by the words that she offered, I realized I wouldn't have wanted to do this any other way. is in person might have taken something away from that in a way that I can't explain. The other thing I want to mention is that this is so much different than LDS

ordination. My ordination was thoughtful. I had people from all over the world as far south as New Zealand, in the US, Europe, the UK, I couldn't have asked for a more supportive group of people who were there because they cared and they love me. They wanted to be a part of this school. Maybe I'm a little biased, but I can't imagine it being any other way. And I'm thankful that it was.

Carla Long 36:45

Thank you, Gail. That's beautiful. Gail, I would do want to come back to you in a second. But I actually have a question for the whole panel. Gail mentioned something that I that I think is really important. She mentioned that she created a sacred space for herself in her home. And I was wondering if if anybody else on the panel also did that? Did you create a space for yourself? Did you put objects in your in your view that were important to you? How did you do that? And that this is open to anyone to answer. Steve?

Steve Otteson 37:17

Well, I run zoom in our congregation. So I'm pretty busy just running all the technical stuff. But I've really loved giving that service to my congregation. So it's, I do kind of take that work very seriously. And it is a sacred work that I feel very fortunate to get to do that service for my congregation. So I was I was honored to get to do that, even the day of our ordination and that I still get to do that.

Gail Shurtleff 37:48

The Irby's, I would say had created a sacred space for us, because we just showed up at their house, but they had the beautiful communion bread and water and these beautiful little cups set out for us and just the fresh air, it was sunny that day coming in through the window and the space was very just clean and calming. And I definitely felt like their office was a sacred space for us.

Tyler Marz 38:15

So I as well, I had my ordination at Royleane and Steve's house and a small detail that I did that was really meaningful for me as she had a candle lit that was inside a rose quartz candle holder. And some people might be familiar with crystals and what they do, but Rose Quartz particularly symbolizes self love, which is something that I strive to tell myself regularly, that I need to be reminded of, and so I I have a few of those in my home, but it was meaningful for me to see it sitting there. And you know, in front of the camera is something that I could focus on during our service. And during my ordination.

Carrie Welch 39:00

I as well set up, it was in my home, but Brian from perdition, you know, I had the two chairs facing the computer so my husband could join next to me and so that is something that we would have done had we've still been in person and my congregation but there was something really nice about it being at home even though I haven't been able to leave home hardly for the last year and to be in a place, you

know, that is really comforting and spiritual just because it's where we live and who we are and to be surrounded by all the things like that that I love was certainly a special aspect of it.

Carla Long 39:43

Thank you everyone and Gail, I remember I think you were a special dress on your ordination. Isn't that right? I don't know if you want to talk about it or not. But I just remember that you are a beautiful blue dress.

Gail Shurtleff 39:51

Oh, I did. Well that blue is extremely significant to me and I'm going to try and not fall apart for this, but that dress and what I wore that day was extremely significant. The fabric came from my mother who is no longer living. The pattern came from my mother who was no longer living, it was sold by somebody else. And then I thought, as I was putting it together, I thought, What do I want to do represent my husband who was deceased. And the women in my family, my mother's side of the family, specifically, who understood what women in priesthood were all about. Even being LDS and whose mother had symbolized that blessing in her life. I thought, I'm going to put my pants pearls and diamond earrings on to represent the women. My aunts and my grandmother. I'm going to put my pearls engagement ring back on to represent John. And it was powerful. And that's one of the things that made it so powerful.

Carla Long 41:28

Thank you, Gail. Oh, yes, back to right.

Gail Shurtleff 41:32

Gail's talking about that reminded me of recently, we had some people join our congregation who are from come their background comes from the pagan tradition. And I had been exploring that, especially in search of the feminine divine. And I feel like those people came into our congregation right at the time where I was kind of struggling with some of that. And one day they had this beautiful necklace on and put it on me. And they told me that it was representative of mother God, like the Goddess. And so that is something that I put on that day, as well. And I just kept touching it, you know, in the middle of everything, just like Gail was saying, just representing all of the women and the feminine, divine and all that part of our journey.

Carla Long 42:22

Thank you so much, Roy. Thank you, everyone. I actually another question for you at the end. But first, I want to go back to Gail. Actually Gail has a little bit of a different story than everyone else on this podcast. She has basically spent all of her church has been online, once since she's been in Community of Christ. And Gail, can you tell us you mentioned Community Circle? And that's the name of it. Can

you tell us a little bit more about Community Circle? In fact, you were were you baptized in person and were you confirmed in person too?

Gail Shurtleff 42:56

Yes, it sure was

Carla Long 42:57

Awesome. So tell us a little bit more about Community Circle and what it's like to have your entire congregation just be online.

Gail Shurtleff 43:05

Community Circle is an online based community. We straddle two mission centers, United Kingdom and Western Europe. And our attendees come from all over the world at this point. We started in November of 2017. With myself, Rand Irons, Kent Browser, and that was pretty much it the first meeting. And Richard James showed up, of course. We were tiny. We didn't know what this was going to do. So we had to develop how we would work with zoom. We use PowerPoint, or I can't think of the, my Mac program, but we use slide presentations from the beginning. But it's been interesting because while we're growing, we've really bonded. It's been an amazing process. And the people in that group, myself, Rand, Michael, and Claire are the leadership team at this point. And that they weren't all that wasn't the original team. We just formed an amazing unit. So it's all done online. If we need to pray for somebody, it's all done online. And we were one of those groups that at World Conference in 2019, were saying please approve this approve this, we need this. So the first time the online, it was allowed for us to do sacrament, the sacrament of communion online. It was an amazing experience. And there were things that were much different about it. In a sense, there are some, there are some interesting things because we can page to each other through Facebook or through email or whatever, saying, I need to talk now. And we can either do it, you know, mobily, via zoom, whatever we need. And we can gather almost instantaneously, he couldn't do that. If we were in a brick and mortar congregation, it just wouldn't be happening. So for some of the sacraments, such as laying on the hands, we actually have more people present, to witness and to support. Now, it's been a really powerful process. And I don't know if I would ever want to do an in person congregation, of course I did when I was LDS, yes, and that's much different. But this is so powerful and unique, that I can't imagine doing it on a regular basis at this point any other way.

Carla Long 46:42

I think that's really refreshing to hear Gail, you know, like some people, zoom churches, a hard church, it's not the easiest way to do it, especially when you're used to in person and you miss in person and things like that. But I love hearing that perspective that it is, it's been something incredibly good for you. And I really hope that people listening this Remember to live in the moment, be in that church

that you're in right now and be who God is calling you to be right now in the church that you're in. So thank you, Gail. I appreciate that. I have two more questions for the panel. My first one is, especially this is especially for our newer priesthood members, not us oldies, right, Carrie? Let's see. So my question is, have you performed any sacraments, since you've become a member of the priesthood? And what are they and how, what were they for you? I know that Steve and Roy did communion, right. So you can talk about that if you want to? I didn't want anyone you think I forgot?

Steve Otteson 47:43

Yeah, no, I, I've just done communion. But like I said, that was a beautiful experience and look forward to doing more. It's not, we've presided to on that on that side sacrament that Roy's also. Let's see, I'll let Roy speak for itself. But she's actually doing one tomorrow as well. So talk about that.

Royleane Otteson 48:10

We've done well, you know, we did the sacrament together. And then last week, I think it was last week, the mission center asked me to do we have church, I believe almost every week here in the mission center in the Pacific Northwest GPNW. And they asked me to do the communion. Prayer invitation to Communion yesterday. I mean, last week, and that was a really lovely experience. They asked me to prepare a couple of minutes, kind of, personally, the meaning of it for me, and then a personal invitation. And that was really meaningful. I really enjoyed that. I thought, I think I'm really gonna enjoy this. And I, Tyler just helped me jump right in because I didn't do the pair. But about a week or two, after I was ordained, I was laying my hands on his head to help with that ordination. And, you know, prepare this space and do some ministering in that service with him. And then tomorrow I'm really really excited I get to confirm and say the prayer for a new member of our congregation that I'm I'm so so excited. Also, a seeker was baptized LDS and is we're going to be confirming and to Community of Christ. So I'm very, I'm just honored in that it's been a wonderful experience preparing. And as Gail said, it's very, very different than LDS, I find that there's more thought and intention and preparation that goes into and the prayers are much more personal. And also very much include the communal aspect, the communal support and the communal opening up to learning from the people that are joining our community.

Carla Long 50:00

Thank you, Roy. That's really interesting, Gail, what about you?

Gail Shurtleff 50:05

I was really excited to do the communion. And it was a wonderful experience to be able to read those words, and be involved in that process. So that was in December. And right now, I, in another priesthood member from circle, are working on a blessing for somebody for laying on hands, for the administration for the sick. And it's a completely different process than what would happen in the LDS

church, because we're actually able to think about what we're going to be saying, the things that need to be said, take into account this person's need an expectation, and talk to them in depth before we do it. And then actually plan a time when we can create a sacred space to do the actual prayer. So it's, I'm looking forward to that. It'll be interesting to see how it goes.

Carla Long 51:25

That's beautiful. Gail, thank you so much for sharing. Anyone else? So my last question for all of you is, what's one thing that you'll remember from your ordination? And I'm going to go first because I remember something from my first ordination. I was ordained to be a priest. In Australia, I was living in Australia for a year and my parents would come down and my Australian mother, she ordained me and my actual father was also part of it, too. And my Australian mother asked in the prayer for more humility for me. I will never forget, I don't remember anything else, she said. But she's like, "please God, like Carla, have some more humility." So I'm not gonna I don't know if it took or not. But that's one thing. I remember. 15 No, 16-18 years ago, something like that. So what's one thing you'll remember from your ordinations?

Steve Otteson 52:22

I guess just for me, what a beautiful day it was just being in a home of the two or adoptive parents who love us so much being there with my wife, saying, blessing coming together. It's just It's like a dream. It's just such a beautiful day.

Carla Long 52:41

Thanks, Steve.

Royleane Otteson 52:45

For me, I would say it having a woman ordain me. And as Steve said, as well, being there with my husband, basically being in a space for the first time in a spiritual space for the first time, especially during the communion together, where we were both, I felt that we were both seen and treated equally.

Carla Long 53:10

Wonderful. Thanks, Roy. Tyler, what about you?

Tyler Marz 53:15

You know, I think I think it's what we sort of started out this whole conversation with about me being called that the Holy Baker of Biscuits, I think it was just, you know, it might sound like a small thing, but for me, finding spirituality and spiritual things in everyday life is just so much of who I am. It's, it's how I find God around me. And it's how I communicate that to people and especially through food, you

know, I've done a few spiritual practices of making biscuits, I've made communion bread with kids, there's just something about taking those intentional, everyday moments and, and turning them up a notch with it with God and with spirituality there. And I think that's something I'll remember for quite a while.

Carla Long 54:08

She sees you, Tyler, she knows you. And God knows you to the Holy Baker of the Sacred Biscuits. If I remember correctly, I'm pretty sure that's it. We honestly say that here. Every once in a while in my house, we talk about you carry your Gayle, what's something you'll remember from your ordination day?

Carrie Welch 54:26

I think for me, being able to recognize the years of preparation that had gone into forming relationships with the two women that ordained me, both in working for the church and just in my everyday spirituality. It was a combination of those relationships, really preparing for that ordination. And in that I felt very held by them even though we weren't able to touch at all. So Just really feeling held in that experience and being appreciated and seeing.

Carla Long 55:06

Thanks, Carrie. And those two women who ordained you are very special to me too. I I'm big, big fans of those two women for sure.

Carrie Welch 55:13

I know you are. Yes.

Carla Long 55:14

They just because they were my roommates for three and a half years.

Carrie Welch 55:17

Exactly.

Carla Long 55:19

And last but not least, again, Gail is what will you remember from your ordination day,

Gail Shurtleff 55:24

I'll take two things from this day that happened. The fact that the sacredness that I own around the color of blue was honored and shown in different ways, and the immense amount of love that was present throughout the whole service throughout the prayer. And throughout the discussion

afterwards. They had sent me some cute little gifts. And it was just the thoughtfulness of the whole, whole process that I will hold in my heart and as sacred.

Carla Long 56:20

It was a beautiful ordination service. Thank you so much to everyone on the panel to Kerry and Steve, Roy, Tyler and Gail, for sharing your story for being so willing to be vulnerable and talk about something that a lot of people and Community of Christ may not may not have ever experienced. Still, who knows if they've experienced or not. So it's super important for them to hear your stories and to hear how it can be meaningful, even if and I'm doing the quotation marks even if it's online, because we are still a community in whatever way we are a community. So thank you so much. I appreciate you and talk to you later.

Josh Mangelson 57:05

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